MARY DORA ROGICK

For a renowned zoologist, it just doesn't get any better than having a bryozoa named after you.

That's how one fellow scientist honored Dr. Mary Dora Rogick, for a lifetime spent studying these tiny aquatic creatures.

On a somewhat larger scale than the *Rogicka* bryozoa, the Life Sciences building at CNR also bears Mary's name, saluting her nearly 30 years here as a leading researcher and inspirational teacher.

Hired in 1935 – after the young Ph.D. wrote to 200 schools during the depths of the Depression – Mary served as zoology professor and biology department chair until her death in 1964, claimed by cancer at just 58 years of age.

"CNR didn't realize just how outstanding a scientist she was until she passed away and so many people contacted the College about her," recalls Richard Cassetta, an associate professor of chemistry at CNR for more than 40 years now. "She was a pearl in our midst."

And a pearl that was formed in humble surroundings. The Pennsylvania-born daughter of Croatian immigrants, Mary was the only one of four siblings to live past infancy. But after earning degrees at the University of Nebraska and Ohio State, she rose to international stature as an expert on bryozoa to become one of the very few women of her day to be recognized by the *American Men in Science* reference guide.

"She was a brilliant scientist and her life was her science," Cassetta says, adding that he never saw her without a smile.

Along with broader scientific works, Mary published more than 40 articles about bryozoa (marine and freshwater organisms, which grow by the millions in colonies often resembling moss or coral).

She earned a major grant from the National Research Foundation for one eight-year study of Antarctic bryozoa and devoted many summers to teaching and research at Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory in Massachusetts. And all this while handling a heavy CNR classroom load as well.

"She certainly was not a gadfly," recalls Mary Russo, OSU '35, a former CNR dean and professor *emerita*. "You did not see her much at teas and other social events. She was in her lab at all hours of the day and night." She even built a lab in her New Rochelle apartment. "But she was a very gracious lady when you met her, and she did wonderful work for her students and her department."

"Mary was a wonderful teacher," agrees Margaret Reilly Antalec '59, now a respected pharmacology expert. "I switched majors to biology in my junior year, so I had to take three years of it all at once. I never would have made it without all her help." With that help, many of Mary's students went on to fulfilling careers in the sciences.

With students or by herself, Mary was a familiar figure along the local beaches at low tide, scouring the rocks for fascinating finds. But she also traveled to study and catalog the world's more than 5,000 bryozoa varieties. One memorable project was a two-week expedition through the Sargasso Sea around Bermuda, aboard the University of Rhode Island research vessel Trident.

"We were on the rolling sea the whole two weeks," Mary recalls in her 1963 Christmas newsletter, adding an effectively nausea-inducing doodle of a small ship on big waves. "I didn't get sick but Oh, did I have black-and-blue marks from bumping into things. We had microscopes on board, firmly fastened to the tables. Whatever wasn't fastened scooted off in no time once we began to roll – even food off the stove and an occasional seaman out of his bunk."

CNR was the perfect fit for a professor who believed the liberal arts are of vital importance to any well-trained scientific mind. Revealing the dry wit beneath a shy façade, it was Mary's artistic talents that many friends recall most fondly, from scientific illustrations to humorous impromptu chalkboard sketches. She even displayed her whimsical skills as illustrator for a popular book on gardening, Cynthia Westcott's *Are You Your Garden's Worst Pest?*

If still with us today, Mary might admit that her beloved bryozoa are often considered mere pests, with some colonies encrusting ship hulls or clogging drainage pipes. But many others are fascinatingly intricate and beautiful, and they do play an important role in the Earth's fossil record. She would be intrigued to learn that some are now seen as potential anti-cancer drugs.

But whatever they discover, today's researchers are carrying on the work that Dr. Mary Dora Rogick embraced with "intense dedication, modesty and a fine sense of humor," wrote colleague Thomas Schopf. The standards she set "are a model for all those who follow."

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Mary Dora Rogick was known for her whimsical drawings, such as this one of the CNR Daisy Chain.